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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A TASK ANALYSIS APPROACH IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING WAS STUDIED. SPECIAL SPANISH MATERIALS DEVELOPED FOR THE PROJECT INVOLVING 1,000 STUDENTS CONSISTED OF PROGRAMED HOMEWORK FOR EACH LESSON, A STUDENT TEXT OF READING MATERIALS, AND A DETAILED SET OF LESSON PLANS FOR THE TEACHER. AMONG THE TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY WERE THAT--(1) THE USE OF THE LESSON PLANS DEVELOPED BY TEAMS SPEEDED UP THE TEACHING TASK AND IMPROVED TEACHER EFFICIENCY, (2) THE PROGRAMED HOMEWORK RESOLVED THE PROBLEM OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES BY ALLOWING STUDENTS TO WORK AT THEIR OWN PACE, AND DEMONSTRATED THAT ALL GRAMMATICAL POINTS COULD BE LEARNED AT HOME, THUS RELEASING CLASS TIME FOR PRACTICE AND STUDY OF NEW MATERIAL, AND (3) THE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ORDINARILY ASKED BY STUDENTS ABOUT WHAT THEY WERE LEARNING WAS REDUCED. THERE IS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT WITH THIS APPROACH IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO DESIGN FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS IN WHICH 90 PERCENT OF THE STUDENTS GET A OR B AND IN WHICH OTHERWISE AVERAGE TEACHERS SHOW MARKED ACCOMPLISHMENTS. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN "THE FLORIDA FL REPORTER," VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1, WINTER 1966-67. (AM)

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TASK ANALYSIS AND FL TEACHING

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During the last two decades a task-analysis approach to industrial and Armed Services problems has produced remarkable changes in operational procedures. There is, however, no evidence in either the current methodological literature or the new-look FL textbooks which suggests that the originators of the most recent FL programs are task-analysis oriented. On the contrary, the widespread acceptance of the inductive method, with its fixed format of dialogue memorization and pattern drills, clearly indicates that the profession is being asked to accept two untested assumptions, namely, that all language teaching and learning tasks are essentially the same and that, as a direct result, all of them can be carried out with a single, fixed procedure.

For the last three years a team of researchers and teachers associated with UCLA has been questioning the basic assumptions of the audio-lingual method. Answers are being sought to four basic questions: (1) What are the tasks? (2) How many different ways can each be carried out? (3) What is the order of efficiency of these different ways? (4) Who can perform each task most effectively? These simple questions acquire considerable more significance when asked in terms of a systems approach to the entire FL teaching and learning act.

From a systems point of view there are three personalities involved in the teaching-learning act: the author of the program, the teacher, and the student. The terminal behavior goal of the act is a change in the student: he learns, for example, to communicate in Spanish instead of English. This change may be achieved by assigning different tasks and different amounts of the total work load to the three personalities involved in the operation. The change either does not take place or is accomplished inefficiently if the wrong tasks are given to the wrong personality or if the work load is not properly distributed.

The UCLA team began its present investigation with the hypothesis that both the tasks and the amount of work load are improperly distributed in all audio-lingual programs. To test this hypothesis with concrete evidence 75 hours of Spanish teaching materials have been developed and taught to approximately 1,000 students ranging from second through tenth grade. Aside from flash cards, morphemic charts, and the posters of **A Visual Grammar of Spanish,** these materials have three basic components: programmed homework made up of about 50 frames for each lesson, a student text containing the reading materials, and a tightly programmed set of daily lesson plans that spell out, minute by minute, the classroom activities for every hour of teaching. It has been calculated that 100 hours of work were required to develop the materials for each 50 minute class.

The tentative conclusions to be drawn from this first phase of the experiment are numerous. Two are rather obvious. First, no single individual has either the time, energy, or academic competence to write a modern FL program. They must be team efforts. Second, the time and knowledge required to sequence the material for maximum efficiency is too great for the average FL teacher. Only two alternatives are possible: the teacher **ad libs** the daily lesson plan (and is highly inefficient) or the authors provide it in detail.

With a detailed daily lesson plan having each activity timed to the minute, the input rate, from the fifth grade on up, can be doubled in comparison with the most used programs. This evidence points to two observations: first, even master teachers waste a lot of class time and, second, a great many of our current classroom activities are redundant.

Programming the homework has opened up a number of startling possibilities. It is evident, first of all, that there is no need for both advanced FLES programs and high-school programs. The learning-oriented child with a fifth-grade reading ability can be taught all the advanced linguistic knowledge needed to make learning highly efficient. Advanced fourth graders, for example, have competed successfully with senior high students. Moreover, everything points to the conclusion that a homework program (which breaks the lock - step learning of the class room) is definitely more efficient as a teaching device than the most experienced teacher. A well-designed program, in short, can guarantee that 95 per cent of a class can do A work on their homework assignment. This has several consequences. First, all grammatical points can be taught at home and more class time can be used for practice. Second, at all age levels there has been noted a major reduction in the number of questions from the students about what they are trying to learn. In one six-week summer class of 27 students ranging from fifth through eleventh grade only 12 questions were asked during the entire session. It is estimated that this reduction in questions saves the equivalent of one week of teaching time in a semester. Third, since the student's study time can be used efficiently one is afforded the luxury of being able to develop a conscious, intellectual understanding of everything to be learned. This permits a multi-modal approach to most problems and allows many changes in format, content, and class-room procedure. Since the student can be taught intellectually to choose, for example, between **tú** or **usted,** or **ser** and **estar,** the importance of the dialogue as a teaching device is greatly reduced and pattern drills are no longer needed to teach these discriminations. The student comes to class knowing what choices to make and the only remaining purpose of the pattern drill is to set the habit and to make the choice automatic. The dialogue, in turn, frequently becomes superfluous or merely another exemplification of what the student already knows. As a result, in the experimental materials the dialogues have been reduced to four for the entire semester, and it is calculated that the elimination of the class time normally used for dialogue memorization saves 20 hours which can be used to learn new material.

An ordinary FL class is very much like a foot race. At the beginning everyone is lined up even at the starting line. A few moments later they are strung out along the track

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with the faster students getting farther and farther ahead of the slower ones. Homework programs prevent this pattern from becoming a serious problem. Since every slow, but earnest, student has the time to do his learning at his own speed and, consequently, ends up with precisely the same knowledge as the smartest in the class, the differences between the two are minimized. Both begin each class at the same starting line and there are only 50 minutes for them to get apart. There are, as a result, persuasive reasons to believe that with time and experience it will be possible to design FL programs in which 90 per cent of the students will, by current standards, get grades of A and B. Moreover, there is every reason to assume that if the teaching-learning tasks are assigned to the right people in the right way this grade level can be approached by teachers who might otherwise show only average accomplishments. In one experiment three practice teachers (senior high) averaged 80 per cent A's and B's. In another, involving 179 eighth graders, a teacher who had never taught Spanish before averaged over 70 per cent A's and B's. Out of one class of 26 advanced students, she got 22 grades of A.

The UCLA experiment points to just one conclusion. The audio-lingual method as now practiced was a great step forward. The time, however, has come to stop imitating the innovators and to start improving on the method. The new look is rapidly becoming old hat.

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